

Two Physicians Debate Medical Care for Aged

One Defends, Another Opposes, Kennedy Program Under Social Security System

BY HARRY NELSON, Times Medical Editor

Two Republican physicians Tuesday differed widely on legislation which would place medical care of the aged under social security mechanism.

Dr. Warren L. Bostick, past president of the California Medical Assn., opposed an administration-sponsored bill (King-Anderson) on grounds it does not take need into consideration and that it would result in inferior medical care.

But Dr. Philip R. Lee of Palo Alto, a member of the Physicians' Committee for Health Care for the Aged Through Social Security, defended the bill as a means of providing the aged with equal access to high quality medical care.

The physicians debated the issue at a Town Hall luncheon at the Biltmore.

Federal Aid Needed

Both agreed that federal assistance is a must if the medically indigent elderly are to be given the best care.

Dr. Bostick contended that the state's recently enacted Medical Assistance for the Aged program, which receives federal support, should be given a chance before additional legislation is considered.

In disagreement, Dr. Lee declared that the majority of persons over 65 do not have access to the best medical care available. And, he added, such access should be a right, not a privilege.

Approves Approach

He said that in California the MAA (Kerr-Mills) legislation has done little more than help persons who were already on county welfare programs.

The social security approach, as embodied in the administration's King-Anderson bill, would improve medical care for all the aged who now do not enjoy it be-

cause they can't afford it or because they won't accept charity, Dr. Lee said.

His belief that the King-Anderson approach would not bring on government control of medical care was opposed by Dr. Bostick.

He said the legislation would place the federal government in control of hospitals "and when you control hospitals you control the doctors because the hospital is their workshop."

And distant control of local problems would result in a deterioration of care, Dr. Bostick said.

Supporting his belief there

would be no government control, Dr. Lee cited various federally sponsored research and hospital building programs which operate without dictates from Washington.

Medical care under social security would operate just as freely, he declared.

In a press conference Dr. Lee said it was "unfortunate" for medicine that New Jersey doctors had declared they would not treat pa-

tients under a social security program if Congress passes it.

Dr. Bostick said the New Jersey doctors mean that they will treat patients but would rather do it free than receive payment under a program they oppose.

He said he is certain the California Medical Assn. will not take a similar stand, "although I can't say what groups of doctors in the state may do."